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AUTHOR Vanover, Beverly; Utesch, William E.
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ABSTRACT

In order to address gang concerns, educators should develop intervention strategies that keep youth from considering gang involvement. It is vital that schools reach the students before gang members are able to influence them. Intervention strategies should stress prevention, conversion, and address the causes of gang activity and not merely the symptoms. Mentoring with or connecting to the school environment appears to be a viable intervention strategy due to three factors: (1) the large amount of time adolescents spend within the school system; (2) educators' knowledge of adolescent behavior, development, and culture, along with skills to develop programs and curriculum; and (3) the school possesses the most powerful advocates that youth have in the community. School staff have the skills, abilities, and community support to put a gang intervention program in place. Once the programs have been developed from research based knowledge, they can be evaluated through process observation combined with written evaluation and interviews with mentor and mentee together and separately. Through effective evaluations of process and outcome, conclusions about the success of a program can be realized and needed changes implemented. Contains 25 references. (BF)

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Mentoring as an Intervention for Adolescents in the School Setting with Potential or Actual Gang Involvement

Beverly Vanover, M.Ed.

William E. Utesch, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Counselor Education
Indiana University - Purdue University
at
Fort Wayne

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of gangs has been part of human existence throughout the centuries. One can easily recall legends and fables about gangs such as pirates, Robin Hood and his men, the Jesse James gang, and Al Capone, who banded with others primarily for financial profit. More contemporary stories of gangs are West Side Story, Colors, and Straight Out Of Brooklyn. A gang image can vary from one of violence and illegal activity to one as simple as a play group like Spanky and Our Gang. In our society the term "gang" indicates, at minimum, mischievousness.

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of gang, as stated by Goldstein and Huff (1993), is as follows: A youth or street gang is a closely or loosely organized association of individuals who express their identification through private language, symbolic behavior, and the wearing of "colors" and who commonly claim territory in a neighborhood. The gang and its individual members tend to engage in criminal behavior primarily, though not exclusively, as a function of the association.

The impact of youth gangs on schools can be concluded from many reports of violence in and near schools. A 1988 survey of superintendents and representatives of 17 of the country's major school districts identified three major safety problems: drugs, gangs, and weapons. Also observed is that the severity of violence has increased particularly with the impact of drugs and gangs. School incidents are considered to be gang related when they are directed by gang leadership or consensus by the members; the behavior benefits the gang; gang motivation is present (displaying of colors, shouting gang phrases, displaying gang's symbols during the act); or the incident is in response to another gang's activity or threat (Goldstein & Huff, 1993).

Because of inadequacies and inconsistencies in reporting of school incidents as to whether or not they are gang related, it is impossible to determine the exact number of incidents or their

significance nationwide or within a school district. However, a 1987 survey revealed that 8% of all urban junior and senior high school students missed school at least one day per month out of fear and that 13% had been attacked one or more times in the previous year. Enrollment declined in three Portland, Oregon high schools because of gang activity on or near the school campuses. In Chicago there has been a recent increase in gang activity with the public schools providing youths of prime recruitment age (Goldstein & Huff,1993). The 1991 National Crime Survey results reported by the U.S. Department of Justice revealed that school-age youth aged 12 to 19 are far more likely than adults to be victims of violence and theft. Schools and connecting streets and parks are frequently places of victimization for youth.

Motivation and Conditions Contributing to Gang Membership

The most commonly cited reasons by gang members for joining a gang include protection, status, identity, access to friends, a feeling of family, protection of the neighborhood, and access to girls (Goldstein & Huff,1993). Hopelessness, negative role models, and poor self-esteem are contributing factors for gang involvement (Conly, 1993). Gang membership fulfills the need youth have to belong to something. They may need to identify with and have the approval of other men/boys because there is usually no father figure in the home. These boys are looking for a male model to emulate (Congressional Oversight Hearing on Local Gang Prevention Programs, 1993).

The weaker the social bonding the greater the likelihood of delinquent behavior and subsequent gang involvement. Social bonds find overt expression in attachment to other people, activities, and belief in a common value system. Family is the central role of social bonding. Inept family socialization practices contribute to antisocial behavior associated with gang involvement. According to Loeber and Dishion (1983; cited in Goldstein and Huff, 1993) harsh discipline, poor supervision, and low parental involvement are the best predictors of later delinquency, criminality,

and association with gangs. Children from families that display coercive and counter-coercive interaction styles are likely to continue such behaviors in school, inducing the same interaction patterns with teachers and students (Goldstein, 1991).

Gang members tend to be relatively alienated from school. A higher dropout rate for gang members, along with a lack of connectedness with school, is a common finding in current research (Spergel, 1991). The single best predictor of adolescent criminal behavior is a long established pattern of early school antisocial behavior (Goldstein & Huff, 1993). However, findings suggest that gang members are likely to hold some conventional school-related values, which school personnel may be able to reinforce (Fagan, 1989).

Among the three major foci of school, family, and community, the school exists as a constant link. No agency other than a school has as much daily responsibility for, or spends as much time with, young people. Accordingly, the school is in prime position to coordinate and shape collaborative services (Goldstein & Huff, 1993).

School Intervention for Potential or Actual Gang Involvement

The most significant programming investment should be in prevention. Primary prevention can probably best be accomplished through the schools. Teachers should expand their understanding of the needs of the whole child and not focus exclusively on the child's educational needs (Conly, 1993). Youth need a cadre of people who can relate to them, help them solve problems, be supportive in times of stress, and intervene with and for them when crises occur. A strong support network provides alternatives to ineffective family units or negative influences that lead youth to antisocial and criminal behaviors (Goldstein, 1991).

Clay Hollopeter, Executive of the Boy's Club of El Monte, California, has developed three approaches to helping gang youth that have been substantially successful (Congressional Oversight

Hearing on Local Gang Diversion Programs, 1993). These three approaches are: (1) an individualized program of service; (2) a network of supportive service providers, agencies, and referrals; and (3) advocacy on behalf of the youth.

In order to satisfy the apparent needs of youth who have potential or actual gang involvement, mentoring is indicated as an intervention. Mentoring programs allow us to move away from trying to grapple with the overwhelming problem of gangs and gang mentality. It allows us to think in more human and immediate terms. Congressman Matthew Martinez stated during the Congressional Oversight Hearings on Local Gang Diversion Programs in 1993 that mentoring programs would offer summer employment to college students who would become both tutors and role models to the project's enrollees who would receive valuable one-on-one help to strengthen their academic weaknesses. Judy Burton, associated with a school based program in Los Angeles, emphasizes the importance of one-on-one relationships: "Every student who is at risk of dropping out or joining a gang or who is in some way struggling with serious problems is assigned to an adult who gives the student special attention. It is important that the youths develop a close and confidential relationship with an adult" (Conly, 1993).

In summary, mentoring appears to meet the needs of potential or actual gang members. An effective mentoring relationship would satisfy the need for protection with advocacy; identity with positive role models and eventual autonomy; a feeling of belonging through social bonding; and a need for status (success) with academic accomplishment.

Origin and Discussion of Mentoring

The epic Odyssey, written by the Greek poet Homer, gave us the first construct of what it means to be a mentor to another person. From this mythical beginning have come the numerous meanings that we assign to the definition of "mentor."

Within the tale of the Odyssey is the depiction of Mentor, the elderly friend and advisor of the hero Odysseus. Upon leaving to fight in the Trojan War, Odysseus appointed Mentor to be the guardian of his son, Telemachus. From this epic the term "mentor" takes on a meaning of "a wise, faithful counselor."

Extrapolation from the original concept of "mentor" has produced a broad array of definitions. Homer's epic tells us that Mentor was elderly and wise; therefore, one would assume that he was experienced, prudent, erudite, and judicious. Mentor was faithful. This adjective suggests long and undeviating attachment, devotion, reliability, and trustworthiness. Mentor gave counsel; i.e., advise, guidance through an exchange of opinions and ideas.

This definition of "mentor" describes many people: teachers, sponsors, hosts, exemplars, advocates, confidants, role models, tutors, and friends. The term mentor also carries with it the implication that mentoring requires a powerful emotional interaction between two persons. Mentor was not self-seeking or exploitative in his relationship with Odysseus or his son. His duty, through his commitment to Odysseus, was to aid in the growth and development of Telemachus so that the son might realize his own dreams.

"Mentoring" can include any combinations of definitions extending from the original "Mentor" meaning. The defining factor that determines whether or not mentoring is mentoring becomes evident when a mentee's current developmental needs have been met and the mentee receives from the mentor what he/she needs and wants (Handel, 1990).

During the years of transition from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, young people are in need (and want) of mentors (Schonert-Reichl, 1992). Mentoring needs begin with self-concept and identity, and become more focused, upon cognitions and skills as it progresses (Ianni, 1992; Schonert-Reichl, 1992). As one progresses into midlife, the need for being mentored is outgrown (Dalton, et al, 1977; Roche, 1979; Hunt & Michael, 1983).

The process of growth from mentee to mentor can best be described by the amount of influence mentors have upon mentees. As shown in diagram A-1, during adolescence the influence by mentors is great, tapering off at middle age, when the mentee takes on the role of mentor. As the novice mentor embarks on his/her mission, he/she leaves a legacy that Erik Erikson describes with his concept of generativity (Lageman, 1986).

Generativity is a concern for an interest in guiding the next generation (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Merriam, 1983). It is the act of being a philanthropist on a one-to-one basis; attempting to increase the well-being of another person. This phase is usually reached between the ages of 30 and 45 (midlife) during which time middle-aged individuals feel concern for the upcoming generation of young adults and, therefore, help prepare the next generation for the responsibilities of their middle age. Their reward is personal satisfaction (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Edlind & Haensly, 1985).

The mentoring process appears to be a beneficial developmental task for optimum progression through life stages. Mentoring needs are determined by the age level and environment of the person receiving mentoring. Mentoring means one thing to developmental psychologists, another thing to business people, and a third thing to those in academic settings (Merriam, 1983). The key to conceptualizing mentoring is meeting the needs of the mentee from his/her perspective (Ianni, 1992).

The literature that exists for mentoring adolescents is focused upon "gifted" or "at risk" (including gang potential or actual involvement) populations. It is apparent that most people experience mentoring throughout much of their life span, but most intensely during adolescence. Therefore, the remainder of this paper will speak from holistic perspective about all adolescents; emphasizing the whole person realizing that all adolescents are in the process of forming an identity which involves all aspects of living and the need for mentoring.

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Adolescent Development--Support for Mentoring

The early-adolescent period of life (10-14 years) is described by John J. Mitchell (1979). Due to rapid body transformations, the adolescent tends to experience considerable body consciousness and shyness which heightens mood fluctuations. The peer world exerts tremendous influence. To survive socially depends on the ability to interact effectively within a peer group. All peer relations are transacted by an egocentric personality which has considerable difficulty understanding the viewpoints of others. The sense of social justice is underdeveloped and concrete. Adolescents tend to think in terms of the present rather than the future, and their understanding of social problems is dominated by immediacy rather than long term solutions. Home and family remain the most important social and emotional facets in the life of the adolescent. The peer group is competing for allegiance, but remains secondary. Interests and concerns are essentially short term rather than long range. Their moral outlook is a mixture of conventional and authoritarian. Many early adolescents disapprove of eccentricity or divergence from the norm.

Middle adolescence (ages 15-17) resembles what we typically think of when using the term "adolescence." They come to grips with a new body and, as a result, perceive themselves as adults rather than children. Middle adolescence is a time of introspection, self-analysis, self-doubt, and self-criticism which arises from the puncture of childhood dogmatism. This developmental group is concerned with justice and rightdoing; it becomes increasingly cognitive and decreasingly egocentric. Greater autonomy is reached, thus more complicated relationships within the family unit exist. Peers are vital to their sense of achievement and accomplishment because middle adolescents have a willingness to climb social ladders and achieve greater recognition. When reaching the age of 16 years, dropping out of school becomes a viable option for the first time.

The adolescent stage of social development is explained by Erik Erikson (1968). The development of identity vs. identity confusion is the developmental task of the adolescent. One major

pitfall in this struggle for a self-chosen identity is the adoption of a negative identity. The adolescent's choice of a negative identity frequently represents a desperate attempt at becoming "somebody" or achieving mastery when positive alternatives are blocked or seem remote. Others may encounter identity confusion when the search for self becomes too difficult or overwhelming resulting in high levels of anxiety, sense of inadequacy, and a tendency toward rigid behavior (Atwater, 1988).

The Mentoring Program

The idea of a mentoring program for youth is appealing to many who are looking for ways to help youth through a caring relationship, rather than through professionalized education, training programs, and social services alone (Flaxman, 1992).

Mentoring occurs naturally when adolescents use the guidance of someone whom they find accidentally to help them pass through a stage of development or conquer a new body of learning. Natural mentoring relationships happen spontaneously and generally last for several years. When the mentee has gained what was wanted and needed the relationship breaks up and, in the best cases, becomes a friendship of equals (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988).

Planned mentoring programs have been developed because of the perceived power of the mentoring relationship. Planned mentoring is more structured and programmatic; the content of the message is more homogeneous and neutral, and can be accepted or rejected more easily. It is possibly less compelling as well. The relationship is less intense, the encounters less frequent over a shorter period of time, thus producing more limited results when compared to natural mentoring (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988).

The current information as to what makes a successful mentoring program has been gleaned from programs in the private and public sector. Phillips-Jones (1983) has identified, through review of several mentoring programs, ten features critical for success. The features identified are: (1)

support by top management, (2) integration into a larger career development or management training effort, (3) voluntary participation, (4) short program, (5) careful selection of mentors and mentees, (6) orientation for mentors and mentees, (7) "structured flexibility" to allow mentors to use their own style, (8) preparation of mentees, (9) delineation of roles to prevent problems, and (10) careful monitoring of the program.

Hahn (1992) has identified critical points for success: (1) adequate marketing, (2) a clear identity of the target group and recruitment that is consistent with the defined target group, (3) a well articulated and consistent identity, (4) a focused operating system, and (5) a well designed service delivery system. Successful programs simply have more able staff; a clearer, more consistent identity; and a better run organization than other programs. The marketing of youth programs is successful when it concentrates primarily upon the mentees' desires.

Mentees may be recruited through other programs that are working in tandem, giving multiple interventions. The mentee should be receptive to the program and take responsibility for learning what the mentor has to offer. He/she must be able to see the immediacy of the payoff.

All programs for mentoring have a training component; however, it varies widely in its seriousness. At a minimum most programs offer short workshops and/or introductory get-togethers. Other programs offer longer, more intense training. Training cannot compensate for the lack of spontaneity of the connection but it can ensure that a mentor will exhibit certain behaviors. It also defines and regulates the activity between the mentor and mentee making certain that objectives in mentoring will be met (Flaxman, Ascher & Harrington, 1988).

In natural mentoring the length and frequency of contact appears to be daily over a time period of two to eight years. Planned mentoring programs are much shorter and the frequency of contacts is far less. These relationships should be ended or at least renegotiated after six months.

Socialization and skill development are the general goals of most mentoring programs for youth. These goals should be modest and targeted. This includes an instrumental role (help negotiate the environment) and a psychosocial role (personal change) with the proportions depending on the needs of the mentee. A mentor can be free to use any style he/she wants within the goals and objectives of the mentoring process.

The William and Mary Mentorship Model

An example of a mentoring program for adolescents is the William and Mary Mentorship Model. It establishes mentoring between gifted public school students and undergraduate students at the college who have common areas of interest (Prillaman & Richardson, 1989). Although the William and Mary Model was developed for "gifted" students, it also meets the needs of potential or actual gang adolescents as previously recommended by Congressman Matthew Martinez.

A faculty member from the College of William and Mary's School of Education initiated the program and established a partnership with surrounding public school divisions. Students who have been identified as gifted and talented are eligible to participate in the program. Applications are submitted and determination is made by the school resource teacher in conjunction with college faculty. Final determination with selection of mentees is dependent upon being successful in locating mentors for a suitable match. The potential mentees select three of the variety of interest areas available.

Recruitment and screening of mentors is accomplished by three approaches: (1) the project director describes the program in various classes throughout the campus and announce an informational meeting, (2) chairpersons in the School of Arts and Sciences are requested to share the mentoring program information with faculty in their departments and announce the details in classes, and (3) faculty members are requested to recommend students for the program. The screening process is done via a biographical instrument, interviews by project staff, and recommendations from

faculty and peers. The final selection of mentors is determined by: ability to motivate, plan, organize, and direct varied activities; a willingness to seek and explore unique opportunities for mentees; the ability to communicate and to relate to the mentees; and the time to devote to the entire project.

Parents of the mentees are informed of commitments that must be made and are requested to sign an approval form. Mentees are matched by program staff with mentors through a careful review of the mentee's areas of interest. The matches are discussed with staff in the local school to determine if the match is compatible.

Mentors are prepared through a three step process: (1) extensive individual consultation with project staff, (2) four training sessions, and (3) providing mentors with a resource manual and the opportunity to enroll in a credit course on mentoring. Through this training the mentors are able to provide the mentee a variety of experiences and opportunities.

One week before the twelve week program begins, the parents, mentors, mentees, resource teachers, and college project staff are brought together to become acquainted, to determine appropriate times (at least five hours of contact time per week) for weekly sessions, and to discuss mutual interests and tentative plans.

During the first week of the program the mentors and mentees work together on a formalized plan and outline the activities for the twelve week period. As the program unfolds, the mentor and mentee complete a weekly report to determine whether the plan is working successfully and if any changes are needed. All changes are discussed with all participants. During the last week of the mentorship, parents, mentors, mentees, school officials, and project staff assemble to participate in the demonstration of the "final product" which may take any form.

The William and Mary Mentoring Model not only satisfies the criteria for success as posed by Phillips-Jones (1983) but also satisfies the criteria of intersubjectivity (Gallimore, Tharp, & John

-Steiner, 1992); that joint activity serves as reward to its members and participants tend to develop more differentiated and pronounced feelings toward one another.

Discussion

It is time that we begin to address the gang concerns from an educational perspective. Educators can develop the intervention strategies that keep youth from considering gang involvement as an option. The schools must reach the students before the gang members are able to influence them. Intervention strategies should stress prevention, conversion, and addressing the causes of gang activity and not just the symptoms.

Mentoring with or connected to the school environment appears to be a viable intervention strategy due to: the larger amount of time adolescents spend within the system; educators' knowledge of adolescent behavior, development, and culture, along with skills to develop programs and curriculum; and the schools possess the most powerful advocates that youth have in the community. School staff have the skills, abilities, and community support to put a gang intervention mentoring program in place.

There is currently a lack of consensus on the definition of "gangs" and "mentoring." Law enforcement professionals define gangs by criminal behavior and researchers find their definition through the origin of the delinquency and criminal activity. The term "mentoring" is a catch-all for any type of helping, enrichment, or resource. Definitions inevitably affect the response to programs and the most suitable way to address them.

The research on gangs and mentoring/youth programs is limited, yielding inconclusive results. Further research of gangs in various environments across the nation need to be studied in order to determine specific needs that will shape the structure of intervention programs established by or with the schools. Once the programs have been developed from research based knowledge, they can be evaluated through process observation combined with written evaluation and interviews with mentor

and mentee together and separately. Through effective evaluations of process and outcome, conclusions about the success of a program can be realized and needed changes can be implemented.

Appropriate mentors are difficult to find. Mentors may be chosen because they are available rather than being the right person for a program. Mentors may drop out of a program due to the time commitment, or they may be confused about what is expected of them and cannot meet the responsibilities they have taken on. Therefore, mentors need to be trained, not only for clarification of their role as mentors but also as a method of determining who should and should not be a mentor. Commitment is imperative and the mentor must be able to accomplish with or give to the mentee what he/she feels he/she needs within the parameters of the program.

Not all adolescents with potential or actual gang involvement are suitable for a mentoring program. Personal qualities and interaction styles may indicate other interventions. The mentees must be committed and fully understand the parameters, goals, and desired outcome of the relationship with properly selected mentors. Even within the construct of a well planned and organized program, relationships may have difficulty; therefore, recourse and/or resolution must be available.

The accurate "fit" between mentor and mentee is central to the success of a mentoring program. Relationships that have, among other attributes, the component of a healthy emotional attachment attest to a proper "fit"--a component present in natural mentoring. It is suggested that program organizers examine the environment of the student with potential or actual gang involvement for appropriate persons already involved with the adolescent's life. Relationships that already have the component of natural mentoring can be cultivated and nurtured as a part of a well organized, structured plan with clarified goals, action plans, and final product.

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